

ENTERTAINMENT AND THE ARTS



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Haunting style in crucifixion panel

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THE EXHIBITION: Paintings by Uno Heikkinen, artist from Finland (Gallery 101, Standard Bank Centre, Main Street and Hollard Street).

SHOULD you describe Uno Heikkinen's soft, gentle-toned water-colours as fantasies, it would be almost essential to prefix the word with "eerie," "strange," or even "macabre." The artist's world is built up from people, so that objects in

his compositions — apart from factual people — become bodies, or lightly stated human shapes.

Because of this, it is the work in which the crowds convey a semblance of a message that the artist's haunting (or haunted) style is at its finest. Such as the very dramatic crucifixion panel, in which an arc of light sweeps over the crosses, emphasizing the tapestry of people that spreads upwards towards the crosses.

Either side of this composition, two panels of beseeching beings, arms outflung towards celestial lights, seem creatures on the point of salvation. In such works, using soft washes of water colour with brief Indian ink outlines, the artist attains a delicacy and luminosity that enhances the spiritual atmosphere.

Much of the work has this

religious flavour — or, rather, a hint of Armageddon.

Even where Heikkinen is concerned with more illustrative compositions, the ethereal crowds surge in, almost as if he has little choice. A forest, No 28, becomes a glade of suggested, shadowy yellowish-green figures. No 22 that, fleetingly, looks like a study of tree-trunks is, in reality, a series of vertical figures with upraised arms and elongated torsos.

An exhibition of deliberately lightweight line and colour washes, with a soupcon of spiritualism . . . as if the artist's hand glides along, evolving beings that are visible to him, but invisible to others. So, with gentle and soft tonal choices, the fantasy flavour is unusual, often ethereal, sometimes sinister — but seldom of the hard, matter-of-fact and commercial world that we know.

